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From Kāñcīpuram to Ahobilam and Back: Narasiṃha Chasing the Demons in the *Kāñcīmāhātmya* 3*

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to discuss the reasons behind mapping three sites of Narasiṃha worship (Kāñcī, Ahobilam, Ghaṭikādri) in terms of the 3rd chapter of the Vaiṣṇava-oriented *Kāñcīmāhātmya*. Textual analysis of the Narasiṃha myth of the text reveals that it has been inspired by various local narrations related to the places located on the route sketched by the deity's travels. The most effective means of connecting these places is the mythical narrative on Narasiṃha's race after the demons, which frames the story and hence unifies single episodes inspired by appropriate local traditions. The purpose of such a literary technique is to produce a certain area that for some reasons was, or was intended to be, important for its inhabitants. Remarkably, maintaining the Andhra-bounded motif of Narasiṃha, who kills Hiraṇyakaśipu at Ahobilam, the furthest destination on the route, makes this particular site an indispensable and especially meaningful spot on the KM 3 literary map. Since the demarcated territory transgresses in a way the land of the Tamils, the paper also attempts to determine whether the particular version of the Narasiṃha myth in the KM 3 may reflect the religious and political reality of South India under the rule of Vijayanagara kings, i.e. after the 14th century.

Keywords

Ahobilam, connected places, demon, Kāñcīpuram, *Kāñcīmāhātmya*, local myths, Narasiṃha, Vijayanagara.

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1. Introduction

Localizing its plot in the area stretching from Kāñcīpuram (current Tamilnadu) up to Ahobilam (current Andhra Pradesh, approximately 350 km to the north of Kāñcīpuram), makes the version of the Narasiṃha myth in the 3rd chapter of the Vaiṣṇava-oriented Sanskrit glorification of Kāñcī[puram],[1] the *Kāñcīmāhātmya* (hereafter KM), an unique alternative to a widely recognized narrative concerning the fourth *avatāra* of Viṣṇu preserved in the Puranic corpus.[2] Although the KM 3 variation of the myth maintains the core of its normative counterpart pertaining to Hiraṇyakaśipu's attempt on Prahlāda's life, other episodes betray various beliefs basically connected to the sacred territory of the Varadarāja Temple at Kāñcī (Hastigiri/Satyavratakṣetra) and the centre of Narasiṃha worship at Ahobilam. In short, with the intent of slaying the demon, Narasiṃha leaves Kāñcī and visits Ahobilam. Having killed Hiraṇyakaśipu there, the deity sets off to his "home city" in search of the demon's associates, stopping for a while at Ghaṭikādri (or Ghaṭikācala, current Sholingur in Tamilnadu, approximately 70 km northwest of Kāñcīpuram).

Referring to previous research on the *māhātmya* genre as well as questions posed by Feldhaus (2003) in her book on connected places (below), the paper seeks to explore the reasons behind mapping particular sites of Narasiṃha worship in terms of the KM 3. Was it intended to encourage Śrīvaiṣṇava devotees to retrace the god's steps in a certain geospace? Crossing the boundaries of the recognized region of the Tamils to reach distant Ahobilam provokes in turn a question addressed frequently in the field of literary cartography about "settings which bear most meaning" in regard to the plot (Piatti and Hurni 2011: 218). Hence, while limiting the discussion to the reasons for Ghaṭikādri's involvement in the plot, the paper focuses on the significance attached to Ahobilam, the farthest destination on Narasiṃha's itinerary. Finally, it discusses the issue as to whether the story presented by the KM 3 can be viewed as reflecting the socio-religious and political situation of the territory sketched in the text.

2. Connecting places, mapping the (supra)region

In Hardy's interpretation (1993: 176–177), KM 3's conceptualization of Narasiṃha as appearing in various places denotes the idea of *bhakti* in the sense that the deity becomes easily accessible to the people from different corners of the area covered by his travels. As a matter of fact, the symbolism of the pan-Indian *bhakti*-oriented Narasiṃha myth, according to which not only did he save

[1] For Śaiva legends of Kāñcī preserved in the Tamil *Kāñcīpurāṇa* inspired by the Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya* see Dessigane *et al* (1964).

[2] For various versions of the Puranic Narasiṃha myth see for instance Soifer (1991).

the ardent Prahlāda, but also, having killed his father Hiraṇyakaśipu, he released the demon, makes the deity a perfect protector for all his devotees despite their provenance or previous beliefs.[3] However, the outcomes of research advanced by Feldhaus (2003) and the methods of literary cartography theory provide a fuller treatment of the concept signalled by Hardy (1993), that the aim of highlighting sites in a text is to delineate the space framed by the traveller's itinerary and thus to create a certain area, a so-called "supraregion". In Feldhaus's view (2003: 13), a set of places of coherence and special value to their inhabitants which as a collective contrasts with some other set of places might be, despite the data of "the objective geography", viewed as a region. The connections between the places are usually based on narratives, religious concepts, and/or practices. Such an idea recurs in Hindu tradition quite often, either in regard to clusters embracing the Indian subcontinent, such as the 108 seats of the Goddess (Eck 2012: 31; Feldhaus 2003: 127–128), or in regard to groupings of a smaller scale situated within regional or local domains. For instance, in the region of historical Andhra (now split into Andhra Pradesh and Telangana) where the cult of Narasimha has been especially prolific, this is true of the case of a holy cluster embracing the five Narasiṃha temples (*pañcanṛsiṃhakṣetra*) at Vadapalli, Mattapali, Ketavam, Maṅgalagiri and Vedādri (Vedagiri 2004), or of Ahobilam itself, with its recognized pattern of nine Narasiṃha temples within the boundaries of the sacred territory called *navanarasiṃhakṣetra*.[4]

According to literary cartography theorists, a journey from one place to another might be perceived as reflecting an exceptional "literary map" of a certain zone produced through translating spatial elements of fictional texts into cartographic symbols (Piatti and Hurni 2011: 218). In the case of the KM 3, the occurrence of popular toponyms makes the excursion of Narasiṃha easily localized geospatially: it leads off from Kāñcī to Ahobilam and back, with a stop in Ghatikādri on a return journey. The KM 3 literary map thus mirrors a sort of actual "supraregion" that transgresses the land of the Tamils (Hardy 1993: 166),

[3] As Hiltelbeitel (1989: 1) has shown, the theology of *bhakti* shapes the mythologies of "demon devotees", who are converted by the gods either when defeated by them or when killed, as their death implies reincarnation into the gods' devotees. This concept reflects the symbolism of the normative pan-Indian Narasiṃha myth mentioned above, yet gains even more meaning when applied to its local variants, especially if contextualized within the policy of Vijayanagara rulers, for whom Narasiṃha was the model of a brave king: the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu denotes a local chief or the whole local community that has been killed by Narasimha and consequently accepted within the hierarchical structure of the state.

[4] The nine temples are: the Ahobilanarasiṃha Swamy temple of Upper Ahobilam (situated on a hill, with the *garbhagṛha* in a natural cave) which hosts the self-manifested (*svayambhu*) fierce (*ugra*) Narasiṃha as the Lord of Ahobilam ripping apart the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu; the Bhārgavanarasiṃha temple; Yogānandanarasiṃha temple; the Chatravātanarasiṃha temple; the Karañjanarasiṃha temple; the Pāvananarasiṃha temple; the Mālolanarasiṃha temple; the Vārāhanarasiṃha temple; the Jvālānarasiṃha temple. The tenth (and the latest) temple, excluded from the major scheme, is the Prahlādavarada temple of Lower Ahobilam with Lakṣmīnarasiṃha as the presiding deity, situated at the foot of a hill.

whose geographical borders were defined already in the introductory verses of the *Tolkāppiyam*, the oldest grammar of the Tamil language, in reference to the area from modern Tirupati to Kanyākumārī, where this very language is in use: "the good world where Tamil is spoken (stretching from) northern Vēṅkaṭam to Kumari in the South" (Selby and Viswanathan Peterson 2008: 4).[5] More or less the same land – bound by sea on two sides and separated to the north from current Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka by the mountains – was essentially favoured by the Tamil Āḻvārs (6th–9th centuries AD) who in their poems praised Vaiṣṇava holy places (*divyadeśa*) (Dutta 2010: 22; Young 2014: 344). Most likely to extend "the Tamil religious world to a pan-Indian", the same poets depicted several remote northern shrines, basically connected to the deeds of Rāma or Kṛṣṇa (Ayodhyā, Mathurā, Gokula, Vṛndāvana, Dvārakā). A particular focus on Tamilnadu as the centre of the world and the dislike towards the adjoining central plateau may suggest that, in the eyes of Āḻvārs, Tirupati along with Ahobilam (Tam. Ciṅkavēḷkuṉṟam) – the latter situated even slightly more to the north then the former, and both presently belonging to Telugu speaking Andhra Pradesh – were localized on the borders of neighbouring regions, one of the Tamils and the other in the central plateau, within the range of mountains demarcating the physical boundary between them (Young 2014: 344–346).[6] By the mid-13th century the works of Āḻvārs had been collected and the number of Śrīvaiṣṇava holy places was fixed at 108. In the light of the spatial distribution of the *divyadeśa*s' produced in this period by Śrīvaiṣṇava theologians (reproduced in modern books on Śrīvaiṣṇava sacred geography), both Tirupati and Ahobilam belong to the northern country (Vaṭanāṭu), as do, for instance, Ayodhyā and other North Indian sites. Yet, whereas despite such regional divisions Tirupati (besides Kāñcī and Śrīraṅgam) was considered by the Śrīvaiṣṇava *ācārya*s as one of the most important holy sites (Dutta 2010: 19; Young 2014: 352–353), Ahobilam appears to be actually associated with a remote place localized outside the Tamil country.

Fictionalizing the physical space by the means of transforming real-world landscapes into the settings in fiction (Piatti and Hurni 2011: 218) is quite a common feature of Indian myths of gods and heroes of either Brahmanic or local traditions who appear in a given place and inscribe themselves in the locality (for example, the Pāṇḍava brothers and Rāma) (Feldhaus 2003: 13). Such travels of a god that sketch a given area are often viewed as constituted by a series of etiological episodes which explain the god's epithets or toponyms

[5] The map of current Tamilnadu differs from the ancient idea of the land of the Tamils (Tamilakam) and its later variations in regard to splitting off its southwestern part into medieval and modern Kerala with the Malayalam language, and carving out the Telugu-speaking Andhra Pradesh from the Madras Presidency in 1956 (Selby and Viswanathan Peterson 2008: 4–5). In 2014 Andhra Pradesh was divided into Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

[6] Young (2014: 344) thinks that such animosity towards the nearest north could be the outcome of political tensions since the time of the Satavāhana dynasty.

of a country he traverses (Ramanujan 1993: 106). This is also a conventional strategy to sanctify a site in its eulogy, *sthalapurāṇa* or *māhātmya*, where a visit of any mythological persona makes the local temple/space holy and connects it with Brahmanic traditions. However, the importance of *māhātmya*s – the texts connected to certain shrines, often already popular pilgrimage centres, with the aim of glorifying them – lies in the fact that despite their usual lack of impressive literary value, they help in understanding the trajectories of historical processes and making of tradition (Lazzaretti 2016: 122). Besides creating amazement in a devotee, the account of *māhātmya*s contextualizes a particular temple complex in regard to social matters (Hardy 1977: 150). The myths of Tamil temples, whether composed in Sanskrit, Tamil or Telugu, are the multilayered products of adapting northern and recognized elements, often transformed during this process, to purposes of indigenous traditions, which were on no account fossilized (Shulman 1980: 3–11). In other words, by means of *māhātmya*s the knowledge about the sacred space might have been contextualized anew, being implemented, adapted or appropriated into a current social, political and historical order (Lazzaretti 2016: 122).

However, usually there were financial motives that pushed local Brahmins to write *māhātmya*s through which various advantages of visiting a site, basically its power of salvation, were advertised among officiants and devotees (Lochtefield 2010: 6). Since the genre has had the great ability to articulate the claims not only of temple priests but also of regional political powers, as both depended on the gifts of pilgrims (Lochtefield 2010: 6), *māhātmya*s might have been used to influence popular imagery. The space fictionalized in the KM 3 myth finds its reflection in reality – a large number of Narasiṃha shrines cover the Toṇṭai region of northern Tamilnadu and continue as far north as Ahobilam in Andhra Pradesh (Hardy 1993: 176) – which brings to mind the fact that differently expressed links between places are actualized by pilgrims who follow a given route either physically, when they travel between them in reality, or in their imagination (Feldhaus 2003: 13). All three sites referred to in the KM 3, i.e. the shrine of Narasiṃha within the sacred territory of the Varadarāja Temple at Kāñcī, Ghāṭikādri, and the centre of Narasiṃha worship at Ahobilam, were extolled by Āḻvārs, which implies that since their time they have been imagined as sacred destinations worth visiting. Yet, while addressing the question of whether the particular triple cluster promoted by the KM 3 has ever constituted a separate and popular pilgrim route in reality, one should remember that frequently not all the elements of a circuit earn the equal interest of devotees, so whether a single site is visited or not, it is the group which provides the public attention to all of them and secures the inflow of pilgrims (Eck 2012: 34).[7]

[7] Economic reasons may force the priests of a developing site to use the popularity of a nearby, more influential one, despite its sectarian affiliation. For instance, to secure an inflow of devotees,

This suggests in turn that emphasizing the dispersed holy sites of Narasiṃha worship within the frames of the KM 3 might have reflected a socio-religious situation to some extent. As I will argue below, mapping the three sites of different status – with Kāñcī unquestionably having the highest authority among them for centuries – and situated in different cultural zones, might be viewed as mirroring the legitimization of interconnections between these sites under the favourable politics of Vijayanagara rulers thanks to whose engagement and patronage Śrīvaiṣṇavism significantly developed and extended its influences in South India after the 14th century. In such a context, as we can presume, so far little-known Ahobilam gained the interest of the subsequent Vijayanagara dynasties beginning with the Sāḷuva, and became a relatively popular spot on the Śrīvaiṣṇava pilgrimage map.

3. The Narasiṃha myth according to the KM 3

Before discussing the content of the KM 3, it is necessary to briefly situate it within the wider context of the KM as a whole. In the view of Porcher (1985: 24–26), the multitude of foundation myths embedded in the KM oscillates around two axes. Whereas the myths of four *avatāra*s of Viṣṇu, introduced in accordance with the order known from Purāṇas (Varāha, Narasiṃha, Vāmana and Kṛṣṇa) organize the mythological discourse temporally, its spatial boundaries are indicated by the recurrence of two caves/hollows (*guhā*/*bila*). The one inhabited by Narasiṃha is situated at the foot of the hill called Hastigiri, where the current temple of Varadarāja was built. The other is localized imprecisely, yet is called Kāmakoṣṭha. Most likely it thus refers to the temple of the goddess Kāmākṣī, where the general plot of *māhātmya* moves with the story of Vāmana, marking the episodes which incorporate elements of the mythology of Śiva and of the Goddess. The central plot of the KM remains the locally rooted myth of Brahmā, who for the sake of seeing Hari in his Varada manifestation performs an *aśvamedha* sacrifice on Hastigiri Hill. Since *asura*s are constantly endangering the sacrifice, Brahmā asks Hari for help. The deity intervenes under various manifestations, including Narasiṃha, whose customary role of a protector is therefore sustained.

The KM 3 account of Narasiṃha's journey belongs to the narration of Nārada aimed at explaining the origin of various names under which the territory is praised, among them *satyavrata*, *bhāskara*, *vārāha* and *nārasiṃha*. This narration starts with the story of Varāha in the KM 2, being in fact closely related to the consecutive episode regarding the Man-Lion: the latter one lives in a cave

smaller and less popular Ahobilam has attracted the pilgrims from a relatively nearby and much more frequented abode of Śiva at Śrīśailam. Both sites along with Tirupati are located within the Nallamalla Hills (Biardeau 1975: 49).

(*bila*) dug up by the former one. Notwithstanding the myth of Varāha as well as the passage of KM 13.25 which seems to justify the ambiguous travel of Narasiṃha by stating that the deity divided his body into two parts – the first half remained underground to protect the sacrifice, the other one set off to the west – the account of the KM 3 might be perceived as constituting a coherent episode and analysed as disconnected from the main plot.

In short, the KM 3 story goes as follows: being rewarded by Brahmā for his austerities, the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu asks for invulnerability, using liminal rhetoric that defines his anticipated power as impossible to be killed either during the day or night. Moreover, he asks for the gift of replicating himself whenever, during the battle, he gets wounded (KM 3.10–14):[8]

> Indeed, I shall be the Lord of Three Worlds, not otherwise. Moreover, I shall never be afraid of any beings created by you! Neither should I be killed during the day, nor at night. If, at war, from the limb of mine hurt by an enemy while fighting, drops of blood fall down to the earth, at the same moment all of them should turn into my bodies. How many drops from my body will fall down to the earth, the same number of my bodies shall always arise in the battle.

When Hiraṇyakaśipu starts to harass the gods and his own son, Prahlāda, who in contrast to the father is an ardent Vaiṣṇava devotee, Viṣṇu appears out of the pillar in the assembly hall of Hiraṇyakaśipu's palace, assuming the form of neither an animal nor a human (KM 3.30). During the fight, the Man-Lion hurts the demon with his sharp claws, which results in the creation of multiple replicas arising from each drop of Hiraṇyakaśipu's blood (KM 3.32–33ab). The Man-Lion also replicates his body, yet out of his mane (KM 3.33cd–34ab). While praising numerous copies of Narasiṃha (KM 3.34cd–37), gods and sages mention Ahobalam, which suggests that all the replicas reached a site known more commonly as Ahobilam. All of them are withdrawn when Hiraṇyakaśipu is violently killed by the deity (KM 3.40–48).

Peregrinations of Narasimha do not finish at Ahobilam. The eight demonic associates (*saciva*) of Hiraṇyakaśipu appear – they seem to have survived the slaughter – and set off towards Kāñcī (*satyavratakṣetra*). There they hide themselves in a cave at the foot of Hastigiri Hill, depicted as an uninhabited area covered with jungle (KM 3.58cd–61). Being still afraid of Narasiṃha, the demons change their mind after a while and decide to take asylum with Śiva. Therefore they move to the northwest (*vāyavye deśe*) of Hastigiri, the site known as

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[8] KM 3.10–14: *bhaveyam aham eveśas trailokyasyāsya nānyathā | tvatsṛṣṭebhyo 'tha jantubhyo na bhayaṃ me bhavet kvacit ||10|| na ca me syād divā mṛtyur na ca rātrau kadācana ||11|| saṃyuge yudhyamānasya śatrubhir vikṣatasya me ||12|| gātrād yadi patiṣyanti dharaṇyāṃ raktabindavaḥ | tadkṣaṇād eva te sarve bhavantu mama rūpiṇaḥ ||13|| yavanto bindavo bhūmau patanti mama gātrataḥ | tāvat saṃkhyā mama tanur bhavet satatam āhave ||14||*

Ghaṭikādri, and begin to worship an earthen *śivaliṅga* there (KM 3.62–71ab). The roar of approaching Narasiṃha terrifies the demons, so they set off towards Kāñcī again and disappear in a cave (*bila*) inhabited by Narasiṃha (KM 3.71cd–77ab), through which they proceed to hell (Pātāla). The Man-Lion leaves Ghaṭikādri, follows the demons to Kāñcī, enters the cave, and concludes his trip there with the intention of capturing the *asura*s on their return from Pātāla.

Summing up, the route of Narasiṃha presented in the KM 3 is: Kāñcī–Ahobilam–Ghaṭikādri–Kāñcī.

4. The journey of Narasiṃha, multiplication, and the Goddess

Two factors that make the KM 3 version of Narasiṃha myth peculiar are the depiction of the deity as travelling from one place to another, and his ability to replicate. These adduced elements root the story in a local landscape, yet they are also skilfully intertwined in the Puranic version of the myth in a way that its general overtone is maintained. Although killing the demon is contextualized anew in a particular geospace, it remains the primary function of Narasiṃha. Given that it is Ahobilam where Narasiṃha assumes his ferocious aspect and sucks the demon's blood, the story's crucial event, the act of going off towards Kāñcī might be perceived as enabling the deity to realize his task. This in turn poses a question about the relation between the order of the sites mapped in the KM 3 story and various aspects, either peaceful or violent, Narasiṃha is believed to display in each of them in agreement with particular local traditions. From this perspective, the KM 3 account resembles a jigsaw arranged out of several locally seated beliefs that pertain to a variety of Narasiṃha's aspects and adventures. Taken together these pieces create a cohesive plot that nevertheless crosses the boundaries of the Tamils by the means of the deity who reaches Ahobilam. Since these are narrations from this particular site that more or less obviously inspired a significant part of the KM 3 story and, moreover, this very site constitutes the furthest point on Narasiṃha's route, in the following analysis I will consider it as the one attributed with special meanings for the plot, and possibly, in a certain geopolitical reality.

As already stated, the concept of theriomorphic Narasiṃha seems to emerge from indigenous beliefs (Sontheimer 1985). The most ancient layer of its cult preserved in the Andhra region where the unique relief depicting Narasiṃha as a lion, dated to the 4th century, was discovered (Waheed Khan 1964), is still represented by various songs and legends composed predominantly in the Telugu language which endow the deity with certain animal features. Imagined as a ferocious feline living in a forest, the deity must have been worshipped by a hunter-gatherer Ceñcū tribe that has inhabited the area of Ahobilam since the Paleolithic Age (Fürer-Haimendorf 1982: 2). In the process of Sanskritization the deity was identified with an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, although on a local level

it retained its original distinctions of a dangerous divinity that hunts in the jungle or steals grazing sheep (Sontheimer 1985: 145–146). The animal nature of Narasiṃha undoubtedly spoke to the imagination of the hunter-gatherers, and hence the deity could serve as the "divine integrator" of forested and inhabited areas. This happened mostly during the Vijayanagara period, when the process of acculturation of tribal zones accelerated (Sontheimer 1987: 147). At some point in time, most probably after the 12th century, when along with the growing role of Śraivaiṣṇavism the dry subregion of Andhra called Rāyalasīma where Ahobilam is located started to gain its political significance and distinct character (Talbot 2001: 42–47), the Śrīvaiṣṇava pilgrims who headed to the peripherally situated Ahobilam began to cross paths with the Ceñcū. With the passing of time the indigenous inhabitants of the place were granted limited rights in the local Narasiṃha temples,[9] becoming a part of the Śrīvaiṣṇava landscape.

In the context of Narasiṃha's tribal/forest origin, the concept of his excursion through South India brings associations with a predator who sets out to mark its area or roams around its already established territory in search of prey. Yet, being perceived within a Sanskrit tradition as an activity enjoyed by kings, hunting may also point to legitimization of a royal power over a certain area. Going on a hunt is reenacted during a festival denoting a royal hunt (Tam. *parivēṭṭai*) still performed in many temples of South India.[10] Interestingly, its most impressive version appears to be an annual festival celebrated at Ahobilam. The procession that carries the idol of Narasiṃha starts one day after the *makarasaṃkrānti* (mid-January) and lasts around 40 days, during which the idol is taken out to approximately 30 villages situated very often in a dense forest (Vasantha 2001: 143–144). Due to the place's past and its wild scenery, the Ahobilam version of the hunting festival appears to be especially informed with symbolism pertaining to both streams of the Narasiṃha cult.

However, the Nallamala forest around Ahobilam also became the setting of a variously contextualized local story on Narasiṃha's second marriage to a Ceñcū huntress, whom he met there while wandering after killing Hiraṇyakaśipu.[11] Besides reflecting the opposite nature of the Goddess, the aim of this marital metaphor, well-known in South Indian literary traditions, is to illustrate the god's

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[9] Although most Ahobilam temples represent Vijayanaga style, the oldest one might have existed in the 11th century, since there are inscriptions saying that the king Vikramāditya VI of the Western Cālukyas of Kalyani (1076–1126) worshipped its presiding deity (*mūlavigraha*) (Ramesan 2000: 27). According to Vasantha (2001: 17), many shrines situated within the subsequent Narasiṃha temples predate the Vijayanagara period, with the shrine of Ahobilanarasiṃha Swamy of Upper Ahobilam coming even from the 2nd–3rd centuries.

[10] On hunting festivals in Kerala and Tamilnadu see Sharma (2014).

[11] On local, usually oral, versions of the myth see Murty (1997); on its Sanskrit version in the form of a drama entitled *Vāsāntikāpariṇayam* attributed to the 7th *jīyar* of the Ahobila *maṭha*, Śaṭhakopa Yatīndra Mahādeśika (16th century), see Dębicka-Borek (2016).

love to his lowly believer (Shulman 1980: 293–294), or "the god's search of a devotee in the form of a tribal woman" (Sontheimer 1985: 146), and hence to reconcile local and pan-Indian traditions by means of marriage. A story of the marriage of Narasiṃha and Ceñcatā and their happy life afterwards vests the deity with a sort of a full life to be experienced after his obligations of killing the demon were fulfilled, contradicting in this way the Puranic concept that the time of any *avatāra* is rather limited as it descends to the earth for a given purpose and shortly after disappears.

To some extent the KM 3 account of Narasiṃha's travel in pursuit of demons echoes a departure from its normative version attested in its Ahobilam variations. Whereas the excursion of the deity recalls subduing the area reenacted during the hunting festival dedicated to Narasiṃha, at the same time it significantly enriches the deity's life, especially if we consider his adventures after killing Hiraṇyakaśipu. However, apart from these general observations that may rather hypothetically point to sharing locally known beliefs regarding Narasiṃha within the boundaries of the territory covering modern Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamilnadu, the analysis of the KM 3 and the 7th chapter of the Sanskrit glorification of Ahobilam, the *Ahobilamāhātmya* (hereafter AM), provides us with more substantial arguments for circulation of the myth, as it reveals inspirations and creative borrowings between the two texts.

The KM 3 episode of producing replicas finds its textual counterpart in the AM 7 passage, albeit the latter is limited to a short description of the battle between many copies of Hiraṇyakaśipu and Narasiṃha (cf. KM 3.32–34ab, AM 7.19–22).[12] The other passage, in this case strongly resembling the wording

[12] KM 3.32–34ab: *kareṇa tasyorasi śailasāre samprāharad vajranakhena viṣṇuḥ | tasyorasaḥ samprahatasya viṣṇunā vinirgatāś śoṇitabindavo ye ||32|| sadyas ta evāsurarājakoṭayo babhūvur urvyāṃ śataśaś ca sāyudhāḥ | tato nṛsiṃho 'pi samīkṣya dānavān saṭā vidhūnvan sasṛje nṛsiṃhān ||33|| sṛṣṭai nṛsiṃhaiḥ paritaś supūrṇā babhūva bhūmis savanādrisāgarā |* – "Viṣṇu tore off his chest, [which was] extensive and hard as a rock, with his hand provided with sharp claws. Out of his chest, wounded by Viṣṇu, drops of blood came forth, which at once, [having fallen] on the earth turned into ten millions of demon-kings, among them hundreds being armed. Then, having noticed the demons, Narasimha as well created Narasimhas through shaking off the hair of his mane. The earth, along with forests, mountains and oceans, became covered with the Narasiṃhas thus produced".

cf. AM 7.19–22: *yato yato dhāvati daityarāja tatas tato dhāvati nārasiṃhaḥ | yato hi rakṣo 'dhipater avasthā tato na viśrāntir adhokṣajasya ||19|| hiraṇyakaśipos tasya śoṇitaṃ kaṇamātrakam | yatra yatrāpatat tatra śataśo 'tha sahasraśaḥ asurās tu samutpannā hiraṇyādhikatejasaḥ ||20|| ekaikasya tu daityasya vināśāya jagatpatiḥ | śatarūpāṇi vidadhe hy amitātmā jaganmayaḥ ||21|| tatra daityāsṛg avanau yatra yatra patiṣyati | tatra tatrāsuśataṃ nṛsiṃhāyudhakaṃ babhau ||22||* – "Wherever the king of demons goes, Narasimha goes there. Where the chief of demons stops, Viṣṇu does not take rest there. Wherever a drop of Hiraṇyakaśipu's blood falls down, hundreds of thousands of demons arise out of the excellent power of Hiraṇya. For the sake of killing each demon, the Lord of the world who contains the entire world, divided his limitless self into hundreds of bodies. Wherever the blood of the demon dropped on the ground, a hundred animate weapons of Narasimha appeared/a hundred armed Narasiṃhas appeared".

of the AM 7, explicitly communicates situating the death of Hiraṇyakaśipu at Ahobilam through presenting a traditional etymology of the term Ahobalam, which is one of its toponyms (cf. KM 3.35–37, AM 7.59, AM 7.79).[13]

The treatment of shared episodes is more elaborate and detailed in the case of the KM 3, as if reworked carefully. This gives the impression that the episodes which originated within the boundaries of Ahobilam[14] were reused, developed and adjusted to a new textual frame by the KM author(s). For instance, whereas the issue of multiplication is essential for the development of the Kāñcī myth, and thus introduced already at the beginning of the chapter through Hiraṇyakaśipu's wish to replicate whenever he bleeds, in the AM 7 it is rather a collateral plot embedded in a short passage that is almost unnoticeable in the flood of other themes serving to praise the site.[15] Likewise, the KM 3 explanation of the place-name derived from the exclamation *aho balam*! ("Ah! What strength!"), most likely deliberately selected from among other names of the site attested in the AM,[16] is slightly reworked when compared to the latter. Given that interchangeably used place names "express the various powers and attributes of the city and reveal the dimensions of its sacred authority" (Eck

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[13] KM 3.35–37: *tān vīkṣya devā ṛṣayo nṛsiṃhān praṇamya hṛṣṭāḥ praśaśaṃsur enam ||34|| aho vīryaṃ aho dhairyam aho bāhuparākramaḥ | narasiṃhasya paśyadhvam aho rūpaṃ mahābalam ||35|| aho daṃṣṭrāṇi (em. daṃṣṭrā hy) aho vaktram aho rūpāṇy anekaśaḥ | aho garjanam atyugram aho balakaraṃ satām ||36|| iti devais stuto yasmāt tatra kṣetram abhūd dhareḥ | ahobalākhyaṃ rājendra sarvapāpapranāśanam ||37||* – "Having seen them, the gods and sages bowed to Narasiṃhas [and] being pleased praised him repeatedly: ‚Ah! What valour! Ah! What firmness! Ah! What power in [his] arms! Ah! Look at the great strength of Narasiṃha's body! Ah! What teeth! What jaws! What features, Ah! What a very terrifying roar! What strength inspiring beings!' O Rājendra! The land of Hari, which was praised by gods in this way, is therefore called Ahobala [and] destroys all sins".

cf. AM 7.59: *aho vīryam aho śauryam aho bāhuparākramaḥ | nārasiṃhaḥ paraṃ daivam aho bilam aho balam ||59||* "Ah! What valor! Ah! What heroism! Ah! What power in [his] arms! Narasiṃha is the highest deity! Ah! What a cave! Ah! What strength!"

cf. AM 7.78–79: *idaṃ kṣetraṃ mahāpuṇyam mamāvirbhāvakāraṇāt | adya prabhṛti loko 'yam ahobalam itīrayet ||78|| mamātulaṃ balaṃ jñātvā daivatair evam īritam | aho vīryam aho śauryam aho bāhuparākramaḥ || nārasiṃhaḥ paraṃ daivam ahobilam ahobalam ||79||* – "This very holy site was created due to my presence. Starting from now the world should call it Ahobalam. Having known my unequalled strength, deities were saying: 'Ah! What valour! Ah! What heroism! Ah! What power in [his] arms! Narasiṃha is the highest deity! Ah! What a cave! Ah! What strength!'."

[14] The Narasiṃha story is localized at Ahobilam by the means of several topics recurring through the Sanskrit AM, for instance: Hiraṇyakaśipu has had his palace there: surrounding mountains used to be its columns; Narasiṃha appeared out of the column known locally as the *ugrastambha*; Narasiṃha killed Hiraṇyakaśipu there; after killing Hiraṇyakaśipu, Narasiṃha washed the blood off his hands in the Raktakuṇḍa – a small pond within the sacred area of Ahobilam which is reddish in colour.

[15] Note that this is the KM version which underpins the animal features of Narasiṃha while speaking about his reduplication: he shakes off his mane as if demonstrating his power, also over the place. (I owe this remark to Lidia Sudyka).

[16] For example: Ahobila (AM 1.32–33), Vīrakṣetra (AM 1.30–45), Garuḍādri/Garudācala/ Garuḍaśaila (AM 1.51–56).

1993: 25), the application of this particular one, i.e. Ahobalam, in the context of the KM 3 clearly intends to emphasize the physical strength of Narasiṃha to conquer the demons. While such a technique intensifies the association of the place with the belief of killing Hiraṇyakaśipu there, it simultaneously detaches it from other origin myths that might be important for the religious history of Ahobilam (for instance Narasiṃha being born in *bila*, a cave) but become superfluous in regard to Kāñcī.

What was the reason behind introducing into the KM 3 story an episode concerning multiplication undoubtedly inspired by the Puranic myths of Goddess killing the self-reproducing demon, known chiefly from the 8th chapter of the *Devīmāhātmya*?[17] Possibly, besides aiming at stressing the violent nature shared by Narasiṃha and the Goddess (I will return to this issue below) the goal of such a strategy was to smoothly include Ahobilam in the route promoted by the KM 3. The motif of producing replicas is usually interpreted as reflecting the god's travel; hence it has been already defined as a narrative means to connect specific places. As Feldhaus (2003: 91) has shown in reference to Maharashtrian local traditions, a multiplied deity gives the impression of being present in various sites at once and thus allows perceiving them as a collective. This suits the technique behind producing the sacred space of Ahobilam, with its myth of being a territory of nine Narasiṃhas reflected in the customary pattern of the same number of temples built within its boundaries. However, if we contextualize this concept in regard to the KM 3, it is striking that Ahobilam is the only place on Narasiṃha's itinerary affected by his multiplication; hence the motif most likely does not serve to join all the places promoted by the KM 3. In this case, the concept of producing replicas seems rather to be intended to fuse the *Devīmāhātmya*'s myth of the Goddess, who along with Kālī-Cāmuṇḍā and seven Mothers (Matṛkās), namely as the group of nine *śakti*s, defeats a number of demons (Yukochi 1999: 84–85, 112–113) with local imagery of Ahobilam as the territory inhabited not by one but by nine Man-Lions. Perhaps, introducing the events situated in distant Ahobilam in the guise of a story being an amalgam of myths recognized on a Puranic and local level made the variation of Narasiṃha myth – so far linked to a particular spot in a remote region – adjustable to the orthodox norms and hence acceptable to the public exposed to the glorification of Kāñcī.[18]

[17] For different versions of this myth see Yukochi (1999).

[18] Although *māhātmya*s focus on a particular temple which, in their view, marks the top of local hierarchy, they acknowledge the presence of other sectarian traditions. The plot of the KM discussed here moves on some occasions from the territory of Viṣṇu to the territory traditionally ascribed to Śiva and the Goddess, referring in this way to the most important temples of Kāñcī that represent three streams of Hinduism: the Varadarāja temple dedicated to Viṣṇu, the Ekāmranātha temple dedicated to Śiva and the Kāmākṣī temple dedicated to the Goddess (Hüsken 2017; Porcher 1985: 35–37).

Yet, as Biardeau (1975: 60–61) observed, localizing the particularly bloody episode of killing Hiraṇyakaśipu to a specific place must have been difficult for the Vaiṣṇavas, as they were basically sensitive to impurity. It seems that such an attitude also influenced the Vaiṣṇava community of Ahobilam, where the strategy to appease the god represented visually in his ferocious aspect (*ugra*) was to emphasize his function as the guardian of the space. The other method was to add to his visual representations (and myth) a local goddess originating from the Ceñcū tribe who as a non-vegetarian could symbolically take over his impurities, including the task of killing the demon.[19] In this connection it is noteworthy that the iconography of Narasiṃha enshrined within the Varadarāja temple in Kāñcī shows him in his peaceful yogic form (Raman 1975: 45), which is essentially disassociated from ritual impurity. From this point of view the exceptional brutality of the Man-Lion depicted by the KM 3 is quite unexpected. Hence, contextualizing the death of Hiraṇyakaśipu at Ahobilam by the means of a reused local story might have been thought out to maintain this event within the plot of the KM 3, but to no detriment to the sacred territory of Varadarāja. Since the slaughter is not executed within its premises, but at the place that at least in the region of Andhra is traditionally accredited with Hiraṇyakaśipu's merciless death, a symbolical polluting of Kāñcī was avoided.[20] The fact that Ahobilam is not the only spot on the religious map of South India attributed with the event of killing Hiraṇyakaśipu – the same claims are laid for instance by Tirukkotiyur in the Tamil region, situated more or less at the same distance from Kāñcī as Ahobilam, but to the south (Biardeau 1980: 52) – confirms that recording the presence of Ahobilam on Narasiṃha's route was crucial to the KM author(s).

The motif of searching for demons, around which the plot of the KM 3 revolves after the death of Hiraṇyakaśipu at Ahobilam, constitutes the next textual device in sketching the literary map of connected places. In the region of Maharashtra such a pattern often pertains to a local goddess, who by means of different conceptual forms connects the places through travel in pursuit of *asura*s (Feldhaus 2003: 110–115)[21] and therefore, like Narasiṃha, acts as

[19] Basically, bad influences of such images could be also pacified through hiding the *mūrti* in a dark *sanctum sanctorum* or, simply, through relocating it into another place (Biardeau 1975: 53–55).

[20] Despite the attempts of Śrīvaiṣṇavas to prevent it, Ahobilam has been in fact constantly perceived as balancing between purity and impurity due to its everlasting perception of being a distant *kṣetra* affected by sharing the space with a Ceñcū tribe and presided by a ferocious (*ugra*) aspect of the god. Although hidden in the dark room, the representation of Narasimha disemboweling the demon hosted in the *sanctum sanctorum* of Ahobilanarasiṃha Svamy temple of Upper Ahobilam enhances this impression, for this kind of iconography is exposed in Śrivaiṣṇava temples very rarely (Biardeau 1975: 52).

[21] Moreover, goddesses may travel in the form of a river; for the sake of bringing themselves nearer to a devotee; and for the sake of finding a husband. The last motif might recall the myth of

the guardian of local communities. In terms of the KM 3, the link between Narasiṃha and the goddess is evoked overall through the above-mentioned episode of the demon's multiplication, as it strongly resembles the Puranic myth of a goddess killing a demon who reproduces himself out of his blood. In the opinion of Yokochi (1999: 86–87), the prototype of this episode, known mostly in its *Devīmāhātmya* version (8.28–62), seems to be the fight between the demon Andhaka and Śiva described in the *Matsyapurāṇa* 179 and *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* 1.226.[22] In order to overcome Andhaka, who issues copies of himself whenever he bleeds, Śiva creates about two hundred Mothers (Mātṛkās). Eventually, the demon's blood is sucked by Śuṣkarevatī, created by Viṣṇu. To appease the angry Mothers who have started to devour the three worlds, Śiva asks Narasiṃha for help. In turn, according to the *Devīmāhātmya* myth, the demon's name is Raktabīja ("he who has blood as his seed") and the figure responsible for sucking the demon's blood becomes Kālī-Cāmuṇḍā. Although in this case Narasiṃha does not appear, his presence seems to be reflected in the occurrence of Nārasiṃhī, who in view of the *Devīmāhātmya* replaces the already separated and independent Cāmuṇḍā in the group of the Seven Mothers. For the sake of avoiding the rage of the Mothers, the Supreme Goddess absorbs them all. Hence, in both versions of the myth the multiplying demon is annihilated, having been devoured by bloodthirsty goddesses, which is usually interpreted as an inversion of a procreative act (Doniger O'Flaherty 1982: 34). This sanguinary image associated with a goddess transpires through the KM 3's fierce description of Narasiṃha drinking Hiraṇyakaśipu's foamy blood at Ahobilam (KM 3.40–42):[23]

> Having caught him with his four hands equipped with long claws, he grasped with a hand two feet of the greatest demon. Catching his head with the other hand, he put him on his own lap. Having looked at him, trembling under the pressing of his hand, Hari tore apart his belly with two hands and, having opened his jaws inside his belly, he slurped the warm foamy blood of the demon.

Besides the number nine which, as mentioned before, seems to play an important role in fusing together the myth of goddesses slaying a self-replicating demon and the Narasiṃha tradition from Ahobilam, these are also allusions to

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Narasiṃha from Ahobilam who after killing the demon does not withdraw his *avatāra* form, but roams around the forest of Nallamala Hills, eventually encountering a Ceñcū girl whom he marries.

[22] According to Yukochi (1999: 89), the *Matsyapurāṇa* probably borrows the account of the Andhaka myth from the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*.

[23] KM 3.40–42: *karaiś caturbhis taṃ badhvā dīrghair nakharasaṃyutaiḥ | kareṇaikena saṃgṛhya pādayor asurottamam ||40|| itareṇa śiro gṛhya svāṅkam āropayat tadā | sphurantaṃ taṃ samudvīkṣya haris svakarapīḍanāt ||41|| karābhyām udaraṃ bhittvā vaktraṃ kṛtvāsya codare | cacoṣa rudhiraṃ koṣṇam saphenam asurasya tu ||42||*

Narasiṃha's capacity of appeasing fierce entities noticed in the myths of the Goddess, which could have triggered off adapting the motif of multiplication to the KM 3 plot. Likewise the Goddess of the *Devīmāhātmya*, who after defeating the demon absorbs enraged Mothers into her body – in this way "clearly demonstrating the ascendancy of a goddess who preserves order in the world" (Yokochi 199: 87) – Narasiṃha of the KM 3 withdraws all replicas having drank the blood of Hiraṇyakaśipu before (KM 3.40–48). As remarks Yukochi (1999: 90) in reference to the warrior Goddess of the *Devīmāhātmya*, slaying the demons and preserving the order of the world "may be regarded in essence as a likeness or symbol of a king". The same symbolism pertains to Narasiṃha, whose dangerous nature inspired a plethora of Hindu kings to choose "Narasiṃha" as their name. Significantly, the cult of Narasiṃha reached its peak under the patronage of Vijayanagara rulers, for whom his ferociousness mirrored the "temper of the times" marked by constant wars (Verghese 1995: 44).

Besides (and through) various shades of the Man-Lion's associations with a ferocious goddess, among them having the above-mentioned female aspect included in Mātṛkās,[24] Narasiṃha's nature is similar to that of Śiva (Soifer 1991: 106; Eschmann 2005: 102). The identification of the two gods has been facilitated by such factors as their violent (*ugra*) nature associated with their ancient origin, and iconography.[25] These variously contextualized connections project Narasiṃha as a mediator between Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism. The KM 3 myth seems to refer to these connotations through Narasiṃha's visit at another spot on his travel, where associates of Hiraṇyakaśipu worship a *liṅga* in hope to be rescued by Śiva, the only god who, as they think, can resist the Man-Lion. Whereas Narasiṃha reaches the site directly from Ahobilam, the demons first flee to Kāñcī, where they reach the Hastigiri/Hastiśaila. Feeling unsafe in the wild forest that covers the sacred territory, they decide to move, having previously spent a while in a cave at the hill's foot (KM 3.53–71ab):[26]

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[24] An interesting local female form of Narasiṃha is Narasiṃhavallī, whose story is linked to the cave-temple located in Narasingam, 10 km from Madurai in Tamilnadu. The legend has it that when Narasiṃha manifested there in his *ugra* aspect, he emitted such unbearable heat that in order to supress it the gods asked Prahlāda and Mahālakṣmī for help. The goddess appeared in the form of Narasiṃhavallī and eventually pacified Narasiṃha. (I owe this remark to Lidia Sudyka).

[25] The representation of Śiva appearing out of *liṅga*, usually depicted as a column, recalls Narasiṃha emerging out of a pillar. This affinity is also attested by the passage of the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* 3. 354 where a devotee worships *śivaliṅga* until Narasiṃha appears in front of him, or imagery of Śiva, who in imitation of the Man-Lion emerges in his Bhairava form from a pillar (Eschmann 2005: 104–105).

[26] KM 3.53–71ab: *te vai satyavratakṣetraṃ dṛṣṭvā gahanam adbhutam | nānāvṛkṣalatāgulmam bahukandaraśobhitam ||53|| siṃhavyāghravarāhaiśca gajayuthais samāvṛtam | tatra varāhavalmīkaṃ dṛṣṭvā parvatasannibham ||54|| kalabhaiḥ kuñjaraiś caiva kariṇībhis samāvṛtam | sa? vai hastigirirnāma hastiyūthāvṛto yataḥ ||55|| gajendraḥ kaścid āgatya svayūthair abhisaṃvṛtaḥ | bahuvarṣasahasrāṇi pūjayan puruṣottamam ||56|| uvāsa tasmād rajendra hastiśaila itīritaḥ | tasya śailasya paritas samantād daśayojanam ||57|| vyālavyāghrasamākrāntaṃ kāntāraṃ romaharṣaṇam | tat praviśya vanam sarve*

Indeed, having seen Satyavratakṣetra, [which is] a wonderful inaccessible place, [covered with] a cluster of sacred trees and creepers, adorned with many caves, protected by lions, tigers, boars and herds of elephants, they noticed there the soil thrown up by a boar, resembling a mountain, protected by eight young elephants along with female elephants. Its name is Hastigiri (the Elephant Hill) as it is surrounded by herds of elephants. Having approached [this place], a chief elephant accompanied by his herds worshipped Puruṣottama for hundreds of years. Since the emperor resided there, this mountain all around within the distance of 10 *yojana*s is called Hastiśaila. After entering this forest, overrun by vicious lions, causing the hair to bristle due to its wilderness, the scared demons considered all seen trees, inaccessible mountains, stones, deer and flocks of birds to be [dangerous] like Narasiṃhas. Being afraid even of flying bees and moving leaves, with shaken minds they hid somewhere in the grove. To get rid of fear, all of them disappeared in the cave at the foot of the rocky hill called Hastigiri, o Parantapa. Frightened by the arrival of Narasiṃha they silently murmured: "What shall we do now? Where shall we go? Who will be our asylum? Having acknowledged the power of whose protection Narasiṃha will not kill us?" When they were speaking thus, startled, Kālanemi, the eminent demon, said addressing them all: "All the demons, listen to what I am saying. In order to make Narasiṃha flee swiftly, we shall approach the Creator of World, who is the Protector, having obtained the asylum with whom we will become fearful: the Destroyer of Tripura, the Lord of Three Worlds, the Destroyer of Dakṣa sacrifice, the Seizer. He alone is the Creator, the Destroyer of World, the Asylum of Devotees. (When) worshipped, within a moment he realizes the wishes of his devotees". Having listened to these words, all chief demons, with their hair thrilled, left off to worship Śambhu. After preparing a *liṅga*, the demons worshipped Rudra [praying]: "Truly, let Śambhu be our lord". Because all of them worshipped the earthen *liṅga* respectfully, this place of Rudra on earth is called Satyanātha. This excellent *liṅga* is to the northwest of Hastiśaila.

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dānavā bhayavihvalāḥ ||58|| vṛkṣagulmādripāṣāṇamṛgapakṣigaṇān api | vane paśyanti tān sarvān manyante nṛharīn iva ||59|| mākṣikād api coḍḍīnāt parṇāt pracalitād api | bhītāḥ prakampitadhiyaḥ nililyuḥ kānane kvacit ||60|| śailasyopatyakāgarte hastināmnaḥ parantapa | pralītās tatra te sarve kiñcidbhayavivarjitāḥ ||61|| mandamandaṃ jajalpuś ca nṛsiṃhāgamaśaṃkayā | kiṃ kurmo dya kva vā yāmaḥ ko vā naś śaraṇaṃ bhavet ||62|| kasyāśrayabalaṃ vīkṣya na no hanyān nṛkesarī | iti teṣu bruvāṇeṣu bhīteṣv asurapuṅgavaḥ ||63|| kālanemis tu tān sarvān samābhāṣyedam abravīt | śṛṇudhvam asurās sarve yad bravīmi vaco mama ||64|| yathā nṛsiṃhaś codvegāt palāyanaparo bhavet | yam āśritya vayaṃ sarve bhavema bhayanārjitāḥ ||65|| tam vayaṃ lokakartāraṃ vrajāmaś śaraṇaṃ bhavam | tripuraghnaṃ trilokeśaṃ dakṣādhvaraharaṃ haram ||66|| sa eva kartā lokasya hartā bhaktajanāśrayaḥ | sampūjitaḥ kṣanād eva bhaktānām iṣṭado bhavet ||67|| iti tasya vacaḥ śrutvā sarve dānavapuṅgavāḥ | uttasthur hṛṣṭaromāṇaś śambhum abhyarcituṃ tadā ||68|| samsthāpya liṅgaṃ rudrasya pujarhaṃ samapūjayan | satyaṃ nātho bhavec chambhur asmakām iti dānavāḥ ||69|| yasmād apūjayan sarve liṅgaṃ pārtthivaṃ ādarāt | tasmāt tat satyanāthākhyaṃ sthānaṃ rudrasya bhūtale ||70|| hastiśailasya vāyavye deśe tal liṅgam uttamam |

The KM 8 offers slightly more hints regarding this particular place: it is Ghaṭikādri/Ghaṭikācala, where, according to the KM, Narasiṃha was preparing himself to kill the demons (KM 8.53–54):[27]

> To the northwest of Hastiśaila, within five *gavyūti*, there are two auspicious *tirṭha*s that bring liberation to all beings. O King! Being called Brahma and Vasiṣṭha they are situated below the Ghaṭikādri, where Narasiṃha was preparing himself to kill demons.

Ghaṭikādri, currently known as Sholingur, dates back to the Pallava dynasty. Besides associating it with Narasiṃha, who spent a while there (*ghaṭikā*; 24 or 48 minutes), local accounts derive its name from the term *ghaṭikā* denoting a centre of Vedic learning, which was supposed to have existed there during the Pallava's rule (Narayanaswamy and Balasubrahmanian 1996: 227). Such a type of a school called *ghaṭikā* and operating under royal supervision is mentioned in inscriptions from Tamilnadu from the 4th century onward (Scharfe 2002: 169–170). Through stories concerning the small temple of Varada situated on the edge of the tank below the Narasiṃha temple, local legends also provide a mythical connection to Kāñcī. It is said that Doḍḍācārya (traditionally dated to 1543–1607),[28] an ardent worshipper of Varada who was linked to the tradition of Rāmānuja and resided in Ghaṭikādri, regularly visited the prominent Śrīvaiṣṇava temple at Kāñcī on the occasion of the Garuḍa Festival. Once, when due to a heavy rainfall he could not proceed there, Viṣṇu in the form of Varada seated on Garuḍa appeared to him at Ghaṭikādri. To celebrate this event the temple was built there. The term *doḍḍācārya* implies nowadays the senior priests of the Ghaṭikādri temple complex, the descendants of the first Doḍḍācārya, who became accredited with the development of the town (Narayanaswamy and Balasubrahmanian 1996: 226–227), which coincided with the rule of Vijayanagara kings in the region. He is also commemorated at Kāñcī through the Doḍḍācārya Svāmi Sevā ritual performed during the Vaikāsi Brahmotsava.[29]

In the context of the KM 3 plot, the purpose of placing Ghaṭikādri on the literary map of Narasiṃha's travels seems to be not only to link it with the other two sites but also to introduce the Śaiva imagery into the plot. The Man-Lion interrupts the demons' sacrifice to Rudra and symbolically triumphs over the rival, which also reflects the religious history of the place: the current name of the place, Sholingur, is the Anglicized version of Cōḷa-liṅga-pura, "the city of *liṅga*s [donated by] the Cōḷa-king" which refers to the temple of Śiva

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[27] KM 8.53–54: *hastiśailasya vāyavye deśe gavyūtipaṃcake | asti tīrthadvayaṃ puṇyaṃ muktidaṃ sarvadehināṃ ||53|| brahmākhyaṃ ca vasiṣṭhākhyaṃ ghaṭikādrer adho nṛpa | yatra hantuṃ ca ditijān udyatas tu nṛkesarī ||54||*

[28] http://www.doddacharya.org/roledoddacharyas.html

[29] http://www.doddacharya.org

built in the eastern part of the town (Narayanaswamy and Balasubrahmanian 1996: 227). Yet, if we look at the map sketched by the KM 3, the other factor determining Ghaṭikādri's involvement in the story could be its actual physical location. According to the topographical distribution of *divyadeśa*s, Kāñcī and Ghaṭikācala are localized within the northern Tamilnadu (Toṇṭaināṭu), whereas Ahobilam along with Tirupati, as already mentioned, is assigned to the northern country (Vaṭanāṭu) beyond the Tamil region (Rajarajan 2013: 45–46). Ghaṭikādri's topographical bearings in the extreme north of the land of Tamils project the site as close to a frontier-zone. This particularly situated place could be therefore metaphorically considered as providing Narasiṃha with a chance to purge the impurities gathered while killing the demon at Ahobilam, and to assume a proper form of a peaceful *yogin* before he enters Kāñcī. In other words, Ghaṭikādri could be viewed as a place where crossing of the regional borders overlaps with the experience of spiritual transformation. Another passage within a short glorification of Ghaṭikādri found in the KM 8 associates the site with Narasiṃha, who stops there for a *ghaṭikā* to control his senses, and as such links the KM 3 episode with Narasiṃha in his yogic aspect (KM 8.55):[30]

> Having mounted the top of the hill, he sat there for a *ghaṭikā* with his senses controlled. Hence [the site] is called Ghaṭikādri (the Hill of *ghaṭikā*) that removes all sins on the earth.

Likewise, in the case of the image enshrined within the premises of Varadarāja temple, Ghaṭikādri's visual representation of Narasiṃha as a *yogin* (Narayanaswamy and Balasubrahmanian 1996: 226) dissociates the deity from bloodshed. That is why, it seems, to meet the requirements of the strategy intended to maintain the purity of this place as well, the eight demonic ministers abandon Ghaṭikādri before ferocious Narasiṃha reaches them on his way back from Ahobilam. Demons set off to Kāñcī. After reaching Satyavratakṣetra, Narasiṃha retraces their steps to his own cave (*bila*) under Hastigiri Hill. Having realized that Hiraṇyakaśipu's associates have fled to the hell, the deity decides to dwell at the entrance of the cave with the intention of killing them when they come back. The event gives the basis to another toponym of the Satyavratakṣetra, namely Narasiṃha's site (*nārasiṃha*) (KM 3.71cd–89):[31]

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[30] KM 8.55: *śailāgraṃ sa samāruhya nyavasad ghaṭikāṃ yataḥ | ghaṭikādrir ataḥ proktas sarvapāpaharo bhuvi ||55||*

[31] KM 3.71cd-89: *asamāpte tatas teṣām rudrasya balikarmaṇi ||71|| akasmāt kampitā bhūmis sanāgādrivanā tadā | vṛkṣāḥ prakampitās sarve dhaavanti mṛgapakṣiṇaḥ ||72|| bhītāste dānavās sarve kim etad iti saṃbhramāt | śuśruvuś ca tadā śabdaṃ brahmaṇḍasphoṭasannibham ||73|| garjato narasiṃhasya dānavān pratijaghnataḥ | dadṛśuś cāpi daiteyān nṛsiṃheṇa pradhāvitān ||74|| bhinnagātrān asṛgdaghān bhagnān āpatato bhayāt | hataśeṣān nṛsiṃheṇa dṛṣṭvā prathamam āgatān ||75|| atrāpyāyāti no hantumiti prāṇaparīpsavaḥ | taṃ rudrabaliṃ utsṛja bhītāḥ praviviśur guhām ||76|| adhastāddhastiśailasya tāṃ*

Suddenly, when their offering to Rudra was not yet completed, the earth along with clouds, hills and forest trembled. The trees were shaking and all deer and birds run away. The terrified demons asked anxiously: "What is it?". Then they heard the sound of roaring Narasiṃha attacking the demons, which resembled the outburst of the world. They saw demons fleeing from Narasiṃha, with broken limbs, smeared with blood, defeated, dispersed in horror. Desiring of life, they first saw those who survived the slaughter caused by Narasiṃha. [Saying "Narasiṃha] is coming here to kill us too", they quit the sacrifice to Rudra in terror. They entered the cave dug by Varāha at the foot of Hastiśaila. Having entered this cave, they quickly left for Pātāla. Also Narasiṃha, having killed all groups of enemies [at Ahobilam], ran after the survivors again, intimidating them. Having taken the disc with his hand, he emitted a terrifying roar, again and again facing the southern direction where the demons fled, where there is a place called Satyavrata, which destroys all sins, (covered with) a cluster of sacred trees and creepers, adorned with a sacred grove, full of canals, pools, ponds, tanks and hundreds of wells, as well as of boars, tigers, buffalos, bears, monkeys and elephants and other vile deer of various kinds, full of mango-trees, *punnāga*, medlar-trees, saffron, honey and other various trees along with singing birds, visited by gods, *gandharva*s, *siddha*s and the best *ṛṣi*s. Having gone to this forest, mighty king Narasiṃha saw the Varāha's and Ananta's pond. His weariness disappeared when he felt the offshore wind. Not seeing the demons he thought: "where did they go?". Then, having noticed a pleasant cave below Hastigiri, Hari entered it and saw a marvelous hollow there dug out by a boar with his tusk. Having realized that the alarmed demons had escaped from the hollow to the Pātāla hell, he reached the cavern of the king of Hasti through the doors of the hollow, wishing to kill the returning demons. Since the god who was praised by the assemblage of gods resides there, the Satyavratakṣetra became the place of Narasiṃha (*kṣetraṃ nārasiṃham*), o King!

Depicting the territory of Satyavratakṣetra that includes the Hastigiri, the hill at the foot of which the cave (*bila*) of Narasiṃha is situated and on the top

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varāheṇa nirmitām | tadbilam te praviśyāśu pātālam abhidudruvuḥ ||77|| nṛsiṃho 'pi tatas sarvān hatvā śatrugaṇān punaḥ | hatāvaśiṣṭān dravato bhiṣayann anududruve ||78|| cakram udyamya hastena garjan ghoraṃ muhurmuhuḥ | dakṣiṇān diśam uddiśya yatra te dānavā gatāḥ ||79|| yatra satyavrataṃ nāma kṣetraṃ pāpapraṇāśanam | puṇyavṛkṣalatāgulmaṃ puṇyopavanaśobhitam ||80|| kulyāpalvalakās āravāpikūpaśatair yutam | varāhavyāghramahiṣarkṣaharyakṣakuñjaraiḥ ||81|| anyair nānāvidhākārair vivarṇairś ca mṛgair yutam | cūtapunnāgavakulakesaroddalakādibhiḥ ||82|| anyaiś ca vividhair vṛkṣair yutaṃ kūjadvihaṅgamaiḥ | devagandharvasiddhaiśca sevitam paramarṣibhiḥ ||83|| tatra gatvā vane rājan narasiṃho mahābalaḥ | dṛṣṭvā tac ca varāhākhyam anantākhyaṃ ca yatsaraḥ ||84|| sattīrānilasaṃspṛṣṭo babhūva vigataklamaḥ | adṛṣṭvā tatra daiteyān dadhyau te kva gatā iti ||85|| tato dṛṣṭvā guhāṃ ramyāṃ harir hastigirer adhaḥ (em. athas) | praviśya tāṃ guhām tatra dadarśa bilam adbhutam ||86|| daṁṣṭryā dāritaṃ purvaṃ svenaiva kiṭirūpiṇā | tatra jñātvāsurān bhītyā bilāt pātālam āśritān ||87|| tatraiva tadbiladvāre guhāyāṃ hastibhūbhṛtaḥ | nyavasad dhantumkāmo vai dānavān punarāgatān ||88|| yasmāt tatrāvased devo devasaṃghair abhiṣṭutaḥ | tasmāt satyavrataṃ kṣetraṃ nārasiṃham abhun nṛpa ||89||

of which Varadarāja resides as a wild space (*vana / araṇya*) associated with trees, mountains, animals, but also renouncers (Sontheimer 1987: 127), creates a perfect background for the motif of tracing the demons – linked with chaos and lack of *dharma* – within the area of Kāñcī. This concept is also visible in the passage already cited concerning the first, unsuccessful visit of the demons in Satyavratakṣetra, that presents this area as covered with a dense, inaccessible forest full of wild beasts (see KM 3.53–61). Yet, the dichotomy between the constructs of *vana* and an inhabited space, that is *kṣetra*, is complementary, as seen in the process of spreading the regulated *kṣetra* into *vana* (Sontheimer 1987: 128–129). In addition, the issue of their complementarity seems to be reflected in the nature of Narasiṃha himself, who being half-man and half-animal, embraces and conciliates both realms. At Ahobilam, where most likely due to its remoteness the local traditions were never fully integrated into the Brahmanic mainstream, the Man-Lion's connection to the wild space is particular. For instance, the deity is believed to be born out of the mountain (*girija*) (Sontheimer 1987: 148) or to live in a cave (*bila*)[32]. In accordance with a local myth Narasiṃha appeared out of a natural rock-cleft (*ugrastambha*) in the nearby vertical hill to kill Hiraṇyakaśipu. The same hill is considered to be a pillar of Hiraṇyakaśipu`s ruined palace (AM 1.43). According to Biardeau (1975: 59–60), all this gives the impression that in fact the God resides in the hill or the hill itself is the God. Therefore, this particular hill – like many other hills where a temple of Narasiṃha is situated – should not be associated with an impure place of demon's death, but rather with a god who protects his territory, watching over it from a natural elevation.

The recurrent references in the KM 3 to Narasiṃha residing in a cave at the foot of the forested hill recall this ancient imagery common for the Andhra region, even though in the KM account it is actually Varadarāja who, being the Lord of the temple complex, dwells on the hilltop. Besides, situating the race after the demons in the Satyavratakṣetra depicted in terms of a wild space emphasizes Narasiṃha's role of its guardian. This role is additionally extended through representing him as a *yogin* who belongs in forests and, living far away from human habitats, watches the territory he resides in. However, in the light of Biardeau's (1975: 55–56) remarks on the ambiguity of Narasiṃha in his yogic aspect, it must be noticed that such representation betrays numerous tensions and layers within Narasiṃha's cult at the spot, mostly in reference to attempts at taming his violent nature. Although a *yogin* belongs to the wilderness, assuming this particular aspect makes Narasiṃha a peaceful deity fitting the orthodox tradition of Śrīvaiṣṇavas.

[32] Associating Narasiṃha with a cave is expressed through the toponym Ahobilam, traditionally derived from the exclamation "Ah! What a cave!" (*aho bilam*) which points to the deity's natural habitat.

5. Conclusions

My above attempts show how textual analysis of the Narasiṃha myth presented in the KM 3 reveals that it is a product of a skilful selection of already reformulated local narratives connected to certain places of Narasiṃha worship identified on the route sketched by his travels. Applying the methods of literary cartography indicates how the myth contains motifs that may be seen as symbolically linking the three places (Kāñcī, Ahobilam, Ghaṭikādri). The most effective means of their connection seems to be the mythical narrative on Narasiṃha's race after the demons, which frames the story and therefore unifies single episodes inspired by appropriate local traditions. The purpose of such a literary technique is to demarcate an area that for some reason was, or was intended to be, valuable to its inhabitants. Remarkably, retaining the Andhra-bounded motif of Narasiṃha, who kills Hiraṇyakaśipu at Ahobilam, the furthest destination on the route, makes this particular site an indispensable and especially meaningful spot on the KM 3 literary map.

Basically, spreading the otherwise static myth of the fourth *avatāra* of Viṣṇu over the area described localizes the story in a certain landscape that, in this case, as far as Ahobilam is considered, crosses the imagined land of the Tamils. But what was the reason for presenting the Narasiṃha myth in such a form within the KM 3? Now, I will turn to the hypothesis that this particular variation of the Narasiṃha story reflects certain political and religious circumstances in which Ahobilam played a significant role.

It has already been mentioned that all three places depicted in the KM 3 belong to the list of 108 *divyadeśa*s, which implies their status of Vaiṣṇava holy sites since the times of Āḻvārs. However, the concept of pilgrimage matured among Vaiṣṇavas in the period after Rāmānuja (traditionally dated to 1017–1137), when the Āḻvārs' personal devotion associated with a deity imagined in a given temple was replaced with a notion of a "magnetism of a place" expressed usually in a genre of *sthalapurāṇa* or *māhātmya* that developed after the 14th century (Dutta 2010: 23). The basis for the ideology of a Śrīvaiṣṇava pilgrimage movement gave rise to the concept of *arcāvatāra* in the sense of perceiving a deity as incarnated in the image enshrined in a given temple and in a given space and time, hence much more easily accessible to a devotee than simply an *avatāra*, which crosses these boundaries (Dutta 2010: 20; Hardy 1977: 126–127). In Narayan's view (1985: 54), for Śrīvaiṣṇavas *arcā* is the most important form of Viṣṇu, "his permanent descent into the world as an image which can be worshipped. This image is an actual and real manifestation of the deity, neither lesser than nor a symbol of other forms". Although in terms of Śrīvaiṣṇava theology there is no difference in status among local manifestations of Viṣṇu, as he is believed to be fully present in all of them, oral traditions present each *arcā* as possessing a unique personality. These various personalities of local manifestations of Viṣṇu

are described in *sthalapurāṇa*s or *māhātmya*s that by different means eulogize and sanctify a place where a given *arcā* resides (Narayan 1985: 58).

The period marked by the development of the concept of pilgrimage among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas converged with various transformations on the South Indian socio-political arena. After the decline of the Cōḷas in the 12th century, the Hoysaḷas occupied the Tamil region and until the 14th century the rulers of the Vijayanagara Empire held the power there. These changes resulted in integration of the three zones of historical Karnataka, Andhra and Tamilnadu (Dutta 2010: 24). Between 1350 and 1700 Śrīvaiṣṇava temples provided the basis for the dynamic set of ritual and economic interrelations between warrior-kings of the Vijayanaga Empire and Tamil Śrīvaiṣṇava sectarian leaders: nobles, *ācārya*s associated with Rāmānuja, and founders of *maṭha*s, the so-called *jīyar*s, all already connected to temples. By means of mutual links, actualized basically through rich endowments to temples, Vijayanagara kings could consolidate their power in Tamil country and extend it into new areas. Sectarian leaders acted as their mediators, gaining in this way patronage that stimulated the rise (and differentiation) of Tamil Śrīvaiṣṇavism after the 14th century. Vijayanagara rulers built new temples and renovated and enlarged the older ones. The inflowing resources affected the creation of new, elaborate temple rituals corresponding to the increase of number of people engaged in them. Yet, in the early stage, the policy of Vijayanagara kings was predominantly cherished by a group which became associated with a Teṅkalai sub-sect centred around Maṇavāḷamāmuni (traditionally dated to 1370–1445), enhancing in this way the process of dividing the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition into its Northern (Vaṭkalai) and Southern (Teṅkalai) sub-sects (Appadurai 1977: 47–52; Raman 2007: 5–7).

Whereas some Śrīvaiṣṇava religious centres of South India, with the passing of time and for different reasons, evolved into regionally or even pan-Indian important complexes, others were significant only locally. As Hüsken (2017: 63–64) sums up, for centuries Kāñcī remained one of the most impressive and busy pilgrimage spots, important for various religious traditions and attracting pilgrims from the region and beyond. It was also a crucial trading hub approachable by the roads from the west and south. First the ancient capital of Pallavas (7th–9th centuries), it was ruled successively by Cōḷas, Pāṇḍyas, Hoysaḷas and Kākatīyas. To the subsequent dynasties of Vijayanagara kings (14th–17th centuries), the city owes its numerous and impressive tower entrances (*gopura*s) of its major temples. As far as the complex of Varadarāja is considered, the temple must have existed circa the 7th century, but the reconstruction that led to its great development took place in the middle of the 11th century (Raman 1975: 56). The cave-shrine of Narasiṃha situated at the western foot of Hastigiri Hill, where the *sanctum sanctorum* of Lord Varadarāja is located, belongs to the second *prākāra* of the temple. The inscriptions dated to 1053 engraved on its walls indicate that the shrine could have been added to the temple during its reconstruction (Raman 1975: 45). In

the eyes of Viṣṇu devotees, this particular temple was not only the one praised as a *divyadeśa* by Āḻvārs, but also, in the later period, the one of prominent Śrīvaiṣṇava temples connected to the teachings of Rāmānuja and Vedānta Deśika (traditionally dated to 1268–1370) linked the Northern sub-sect (Hüsken 2017).

In contrast, being a site that for a long period existed in the consciousness of Śrivaiṣṇavas as a hard-to-reach *divyadeśa* situated to the north of the Tamil region, Ahobilam emerged as one of the popular pilgrimage centres of regional appeal only when the Śrīvaiṣṇava *maṭha* was established there under the patronage of the Vijayanagara rulers. Such an association with temples and religious institutions reflected the policy of the Vijayanagara kings of extending power into new areas, especially, as in the case of Ahobilam, into those localized along "the Vijayanagara Empire's perennially contested northern border" (Stoker 2016: 97). However, the early history of the Ahobila *maṭha* is unclear. Leaving aside the poems of Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār (*circa* 8th–9th centuries), who most likely did not reach Ahobilam but expressed the desire to see it (Young 2014: 347), the first prominent *persona* who in the light of local traditions visited the place was Pratāparudra, the last ruler of the Kākatīya dynasty (1289–1323).[33] A reference to Ahobilanarasiṃha in the Pāñcarātra *Vihagendrasaṃhitā* (4.11) suggests that Śrīvaiṣṇavas visited the place before the 14th century (Gonda 1977: 106). The presence of substantial numbers of pilgrims at Ahobilam in the 14th century or even earlier is further implied by a copper plate grant of Anavema Reddy, a Telugu chief, dated to 1378, which records that for the benefit of pilgrims he constructed steps there (Vasantha 2003: 69–70). Close links to Ahobilam must have been maintained by the Vijayanagara dynasty of Sāḷuvas, whose establisher, Sāḷuva Narasiṃha (reigned 1485–1491), was believed to be born out of the grace of Narasiṃha from Ahobilam and had his agent in nearby Tirupati (Appadurai 1977: 62–63). Kṛṣṇadeva Rāya (reign 1509–1529) of the subsequent Tuḷuva dynasty visited Ahobilam in 1513 (Raman 1975: 80–81).

According to Appadurai (1977: 69–71), the predecessors of the *jīyar*s of Ahobila *maṭha* were the *jīyar*s of the Vān Saṭakopan *maṭha* at Tirupati, who relocated to the Kurnool district in Andhra to avoid the increasing influences of the Teṅkalai school at Tirupati temple, possibly already in the first quarter of the 15th century. By the end of the 16th century, having gained control over the local Narasiṃha temples and having established close links to the Vijayanara rulers, the *jīyar*s of Ahobilam became the leaders of Vaṭakalai Vaiṣṇavism in the Andhra region. Some scholars suggest (Rajagopalan 2005: 49; Raman 1975:

[33] The king is mentioned in a couple of *kaifiyats*, the Andhra village histories collected between the 18th and the 19th centuries under the supervision of a British official named Colin Mackenzie. As recorded in the *Ahobilam Kaifiyat*, Pratāparudra offered gold for the festival image (*utsavamūrti*) of the Narasiṃha of Upper Ahobilam. The story seems to be confirmed by the *kaifiyat* of Mutyalapadu village, where it is stated that Pratāparudra stopped 10 miles from Ahobilam on his way to Rāmeśvaram (Talbot 2001: 203). There are also traces of the Kākatīya style in one of the local temples (Sitapati 1982: 13–14).

80) that the first Superior of the Ahobila *maṭha*, Ādi Vān Śaṭakopa Jīyar, could have been appointed by Kṛṣṇadeva Rāya in the first quarter of the 16th century. The beginning of the 16th century is also the time when the Vaṭakalai sub-sect started to enhance its position in Tamilnadu (Appadurai 1977: 70).

Noteworthy, the traditional history promulgated by the Ahobila *maṭha* itself links its first *jīyar* with Kāñcīpuram. He is said to be born in Melkote, but educated in Kāñcī under Ghaṭikāstanamammāḷ / Varadakavi (Raman 1975: 80).[34]

Beginning with the 16th century, the epigraphic records corroborate connections between Ahobilam and the Varadarāja temple at Kāñcī, which suggests that this mutual interest must have been related to the establishment and growing role of the Ahobila *maṭha*. One of the inscriptions at the Varadarāja temple dated to 1509 mentions the gift of land in a village Vān Saṭakopapuram named obviously after the *jīyar* of Ahobilam. Two other inscriptions dated respectively to 1530 and 1539 refer in turn to the Parānkuśa Jīyar, who was the third Superior of Ahobila *maṭha*. Per the records, he made offerings to the Varadarāja temple on auspicious days, made provisions for reading *Kauśikapurāṇa* and donated three villages (Raman 1975: 80). The first two *jīyars* of Ahobila *maṭha* are believed to visit Kāñcī and Ghaṭikādri while touring holy sites recommended by Ālvārs (Vasantha 2003: 49–50).

The textual motif of sending Narsiṃha from the already recognized and authoritative Varadarāja temple at Kāñcī to Ahobilam, where a new Śrīvaiṣṇava institution was established under the Vijayanagara patronage, appears to mirror the actual links between those sites. If this supposition is correct, it could suggest that the KM, or at least its 3rd chapter, was composed when the Ahobila *maṭha* along with its *jīyar*s began to gain a prominent position in the supraregion corresponding to the area under the rule of the Vijayanagara Empire, which most likely happened in the 16th century.[35] The travels of Narasiṃha, the deity that to both the Sāḷuva and Tuḷuva dynasty was the model of a brave and protective king constantly facing war, might be seen as communicating the change of political and religious frontiers and establishment of new pilgrimage routes within them. And retracing Narasiṃha's steps along the route sketched by the KM 3 meets both political and religious aims. From the perspective of the Vijayanagara

[34] The *topos* of his arduous travel from Kāñcīpuram to Ahobilam, which – as it is precisely recorded on the official website of the *maṭha* – took place 610 years ago, nowadays seems to be used as a means to attract devotees. See: http://www.ahobilamutt.org/us/dolai/dolai_flyer.asp.

[35] As already hinted, both the the language and the treatment of common episodes, including replication, are less sophisticated in the case of the AM, hence it could suggest that it is earlier than the KM. Yet, one cannot exclude the possibility that the composition of the Sanskrit *māhātmya* of Ahobilam was triggered by the growing role of the Ahobila *maṭha* as well (I owe this remark to Lidia Sudyka). At the present stage of my research I cannot give a definitive answer regarding the question of dating the AM and its relationship to the KM.

kings, who occasionally took part in pilgrimages themselves,[36] circulation among various pilgrimage places was another strategy to integrate the Empire through giving it a conceptual unity reconsidered by its inhabitants while being on the move (Feldhaus 2003: 133; Verghese 1995: 3). To the Śrīvaiṣṇavas, pilgrimage was the means of strengthening their spatial identity, enriching their ideology through the exchange of ideas and beliefs, and integrating the community even as it began to become differentiated (Dutta 2010: 20).

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KM *Kāñcīmāhātmya = Kanchimahatmyam. Connected with the Brimhandapurana*, ed. by P.B. Ananthachariar, Canjeevaram, 1907.

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[36] An interesting example of the „empire-building pilgrimage" is the one undertaken by Acyutarāya of the Tuḷuva dynasty (reign 1529–1542). His southern campaign depicted by Rājanātha Ḍiṇḍima in the *Acyutarāyābhyudaya* corresponds to a Hindu pilgrimage route covering a sequence of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava holy places of southern India. Although the poet propagated these politics on purpose, inscriptions corroborate the ruler's visit in most of the sites mentioned, possibly during his war expedition or just after it. For details see Sudyka (2013).

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